

THE  
CASE ✓  
OF THE  
ROMAN-CATHOLICS  
OF  
IRELAND.

IN  
A Course of LETTERS from a Member  
of the Protestant Church, in that Kingdom,  
to his Friend in *England*.

JP 3206  
LETTER I.

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C. A. S. E.

ROMAN CATHOLICS

A. W. A. V. D.

A. Count of FETTER, from a Member  
of the Protestant Church, is that King  
to his friend in England.

L. T. T. R.

D. U. B. L. I. N.

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THE  
FARMER'S  
CASE  
OF THE  
ROMAN-CATHOLICS  
OF  
IRELAND.

DEAR SIR,

I Think myself indebted to any Occasion that restores you to a Friend, whom I feared you had long forgotten. But, I confess, at the same time, that the Pleasure of hearing from you, after a Silence of several Years, is, in some measure, damped by the Censure that seems to constitute the chief Intent of your Letter.

You

You tell me, that you lately happened upon some Papers that were entitled The FARMER's LETTERS, &c. which were imputed to me as the Author. And, after some Compliments on Spirit, and Genius, and so forth, in order to palliate, as I suppose, what you purposed to administer; you charge me, by Implication, with Crimes, whose smallest Tendency I should abhor in myself, as in any Man breathing.

You say, favourably enough for your own Disposition, that you have long looked on the Roman-Catholics of these Kingdoms as a discountenanced and pitiable People. That you would choose to allow to others the same Latitude of Conscience that you like for yourself. That it is not a Part of Humanity to break a Reed already bruised. That such a Treatment would be blameable respecting any Individual; how much more so, in Prejudice of a whole People. That those Papers are pointed with a Keennefs of Enmity, for which the Talents, which you are pleased to ascribe, cannot sufficiently apologize. And, that you did not think me capable of exasperating Government and Power against a Set of Men who were



were already under the Displeasure and Depression of the Law.

These, my dear Friend, are home and heavy Accusations, however tempered by Expressions of Kindness and Affection from the Man whom I sincerely love and respect.

But, if I know any thing of myself, the Quality, called Ill-nature, is not my Characteristic. I would not exchange one Grain of Good-Heart for all the Wit of a C———, or Comprehension of a P——t, independent of their Virtue. And I may say, with great Truth, that an Excess of Humanity hath occasioned all the Misfortunes and Distresses of my Life.

I most solemnly assure you that, when I wrote those Letters, I was in perfect Love and Charity with every Roman-Catholic in the Kingdom of Ireland. I knew that they were a depressed People. I had long pitied them as such. I was sensible that the Laws, under which they suffered, had been enacted; by our Ancestors, when the Impressions of Hostility were fresh and warm, and when Passion, if I may venture to say

say so, cooperated, in some Measure, with Utility and Reason. I will go a Step further. I thought those Laws not severe enough to suppress them as Enemies, nor yet sufficiently favourable to attach them to us as Friends. They were not so cruel as, wholly, to serve for quelling; and yet they had a Poignancy that might tend to provoke. And all this I imputed to the Resentment that was blended with the Humanity of our Ancestors. Their Humanity left to Papists a Power of hurting, while their Resentment abridged the Inducements that might engage them to serve us.

Believe me, Sir, I never was of a cruel or persecuting Disposition. I was grieved to see the Discouragements under which the Roman-Catholics of this Kingdom laboured, but these very Discouragements made me fear them the more.

Previous to the Letters, which you censure so warmly, a dangerous Rebellion had broken out in *Scotland*, in consequence of a *French*-Invasion that was headed by a Popish-Protender to the Throne. Be pleased to remember, (if  
it

it is not too mortifying a Recollection for a free-born *Briton*) the Pannic into which all *England* was struck by a few *Scotch* Vassals, undisciplined, and unactuated by any Motive of Liberty or Virtue, save the Virtue of being attached to their *Laird* or their *Leader*. Millions of *English* at that time, sunk in the Down of a long Peace, and enervated by ministerial Corruption and Venality, feared that a Handful of *Higblanders* would win their Way to *London*, and, at one Stroke, put a Period to the boasted Strength and Grandeur of the *British* Constitution.

I was astonished at the Apprehensions that *England* was under from so contemptible an Armament. But, I deemed the Case of *Ireland* to be highly alarming. The *Roman-Catholics*, at that time, out-numbered us Five to One. They were disarmed, it is true, but I was not equally sure that they had Reason to be reconciled. As they were not admitted to realize their Fortune, it consisted of ready Money, and that gave ready Power. As they were not permitted to purchase, or accept a Tenure of any valuable Length; Loyalty, perhaps, might induce them to fight for their King, but where

was

was the Stake to impel them to fight for a Country in which they had no *Inheritance*? Without an Interest in Lands, they had little to lose by any Change of Estate. Without a Loan lodged with Government, they had the less to lose by a Change of Constitution.

I cannot conceive how *Religion*, or mere Difference of Opinion, should prove a real Cause of Quarrel among Men; though it often serves as a *Word of War*, or a *Term* whereby to give Notice for Onset. On the contrary, I had observed that wherever People are united by *Interest*, though of a thousand opposite Sects, Persuasions and Professions, they never fail to join in the Maintenance and Defence of *common Rights*.

I, therefore, did not fear the *Roman-Catholics* as having a different *Religion*, but, as having an *Interest* that was different from the Interest of *Protestants*. Were they a Compound of all the Follies, Absurdities, and Contradictions that ever were generated by Monster-bearing Superstition, had their Interest bound them to us, I should not have feared their *Faith*.

But

But this was not the Case. The *French* Invasion of *Great Britain*, was headed by a Person who was, by Birth, Education, Principle, and Interest, an Enemy to the Freedom and Rights of a Constitution that was established on the Dispossession of his Ancestors; and he was, consequently, an Enemy to the general Change, of Privilege and Property, that ensued on said Establishment. The said Change, as we all know, was to the Disadvantage of *Roman-Catholics*. Had the Invader prevailed; a Change would, again, have ensued, in their Favour. Men, naturally, wish Success to an Event from whence they propose Benefit. And it is as natural for them to act conformable to those Wishes.

Had *Roman-Catholics* been possessed of an unrestrained Property, along with the other Liberties, Blessings, and Enjoyments, which they derived, in common with us, from the Establishment at the Revolution, no spiritual or temporal Power on Earth could have tempted them to permit, much less to wish, a Change



of a Constitution whose Equal they could not find upon Earth.

But as this was very far from being the Fact, I feared, that *Interest* might prove an Incentive to *Desire*, and *Desire*, equally, prove an Incentive to *Action*, and, I am not ashamed to confess, that my Expectations were greatly, though happily, disappointed, by the Steadiness of their peaceful and loyal Demeanour on that trying Occasion.

Believe me, my Friend, at the Time that I wrote those Papers, which have given you so much Offence, I looked upon the *Papists* of this Kingdom, by the Patronage of *France* and *Spain*, by their Numbers, by their Wealth, and by their Union with each other, to be vastly superior to *Irish Protestants*, in Power, and my Spirit of Opposition rose, in proportion to my Idea of their Ability. But, neither then, before, nor since, did I ever mean to excite any Action, or Intention, against the Weak, or the Oppressed, the Fallen, or the Afflicted.

When

When *Brutus* unsheathed the reluctant Sword of Freedom against his Friend, Humanity must suppose that his Heart was wrung with Compunction, while his Country enjoined and impelled the Blow.

But, further, Sir, there is a very wide Difference between a *Popish Regency*, and a *Popish People*. The whole Intent, and Virulence, as you call it, of my Papers, is pointed and levelled against the *One*, but not a Syllable uttered, from end to end, against the *Other*. A *Popish Regency*, in Temporals, alike, as in Spirituals, I held to be, by Principle, an arbitrary and oppressive Government. But I held a *Popish People* to be, of all People, the most amenable and submissive to Rulers, whatever the Form or Nature of that State may be, under which they shall happen to be subjected. And, on this very Account, I dreaded them the more, should they become passive Instruments in the Hand of a Papal-Dictator.

To apply a sure Test to the Propriety, or Impropriety, of my Apprehensions, at the Period

when I wrote the *Farmer's Letters* ; let us suppose, that no one of the Penal-Laws, which were instituted during the Reign of her Majesty Queen *Anne*, had yet passed into Form ; but that Matters had remained in the same Situation, in which the *Monarch*, of *humane*, as well as *glorious Memory*, had left this unhappy People. Well, what would have been the Consequence ? Would *Papists*, in that Case, have been less amenable to the Government, by which they had been favoured, supported and cherished ? Would they have been the forwarder to bring Damage and Destruction on a Country, because their own Interest was connected therewith, and the Fortunes of their Posterity deposited therein ? Would they have been the readier to attempt the Overthrow of our beneficent Constitution, because they enjoyed the Privileges and Advantages thereof ? No, Sir, no. The Absurdity of the Supposition is inclusive of the Answer. Had this been the Case, the *Farmer's Letters* would not have existed to have caused the Renewal of our Acquaintance.

I have read and noted many Instances, in free States and Commonwealths, where *Liberty*,  
when

when fermented into *Licentiousness*, hath occasioned many partial Struggles for Power, many Broils and Factions, and much Disturbance to the Community. But, very few are the Instances of the Insurrection of any People, who have not been goaded thereto by Severity and Oppression. The inoffensive Stag grows formidable, when *at Bay*. The Worm turneth not, till it receiveth a Crush.

I forget the Book, though I remember the Passage, where a Prince demanded of his favourite Minister, what he should do with a Number of the Commons and Nobility, whom he had suppressed and taken Captive in the Act of Rebellion? The Minister answered, *Put them, and their Adherents, instantly to Death*. No, replied the Prince, that were an Act of such Bloodshed and Barbarity, as neither Fear nor Revenge shall persuade me to perpetrate. *Then, grant them all free Pardon*, rejoined the Minister. How, said the Prince, must Rebellion go, altogether, unpunished? There is no Medium that can assure your Safety, answered the Minister. You must, either, pull this Party wholly up by the Root, so as to leave no Fibre from whence



whence future Enmity may grow; or, else, you must change that Enmity into Friendship, by binding their Gratitude to your Person and Interest, with the kindest of all Connections, that of your Goodness and Favour. *A partial Punishment will be too little for your Safety. A partial Pardon will not be enough.* You must either wholly annihilate their Power, by their *Death*; or derive Strength to yourself, from that Power, by their *Friendship*.

By disarming our Enemies, the utmost we can hope, is, to render them impotent. The Diminution of *their* Power adds nothing to our *own*. Repentance is never so permanent or sincere, as when preceded by Pardon; and Favour is, as the polar Attraction, to Inclination. Is there a Man whose Love and Gratitude you desire to engage? Common Sense will direct you to do him a Benefit. Would you bind him to your Service with Hoops of Steel? You must make it his Interest, as well as his Duty, to befriend you.

It is, by no means, my Intention to arraign either the Wisdom or good Policy of our Forefathers.



fathers. But, all Men are, in some Degree, fallible, as well in the congregate, as in the individual; and the Shrewd may err as much, by over-reaching their Aim; as the Ignorant, by falling short, or deviating from it.

But, had a hundred *Pitts*, and a hundred *Cecil*s, compos'd the Senate of our Ancestors, at the Time that those *Penal-Laws* were enacted. Had those Laws been ever so wise and so just, so wholesome and necessary, and well suited to the Season; is that a Reason that they should *continue so*, to the End of Time? In a World, where nothing is permanent; where Modes, Manners, Principles, and Practice are at a Flux; where Life is uncertain, and all it contains changeable; Nature and Reason will conform to Situation and Circumstance; and where *Causes* have ceased, in any Degree; the *Consequences* ought to cease, in the same Proportion.

It is not now with *Rome* as it was in the Days when Princes held her Steed, and Emperors her Stirrup. The Kings of the Earth have, pretty clearly, resumed her Usurpations and Acquisitions of temporal Dominion. It is not  
now,

now, as it was when she cried Peace! and it became Peace; or when the Breath of her Mandate kindled the Nations to Battle. Even his *Holiness* is, now, but a poor limited Prince, pent up within his little *Italian* Demesne. If some few still acknowledge to hold of his Authority; it is a Homage of Words, and not of Facts; they will not acknowledge to hold of his Power. He is restored to the quiet and unenvied Possession of all the Lordship and Interest he can acquire in Heaven. But the Sceptre, even of his spiritual Dominion upon Earth, is, of late, as I take it, most wonderfully shortened.

Matters are much altered with the ecclesiastical World, even since I wrote the Letters that have roused your Spleen. Whether it be through a Decline of the *Romish* Religion, in particular; or, possibly, through a Decline of all Religion, in general; the pontifical and episcopal Dictatorship and Authority are wofully fallen, from the Chair of Infallibility, where they had been seated by Opinion. The Sons of the most bigotted Ancestors do now perceive, that Piety and Immorality are not rightly consistent. And even the vulgar and ignorant,  
among

among the *Roman* Laity, would grumble at departing from an Inch of their Property, though the Priest should advise, and the Pope, himself, should enjoin it.

But, Sir, if the Change of Times, and Principles, Situation, and Circumstances; if the Change of every Cause that produced those penal Laws, have not availed for a Change of *Consequences*; for some Mitigation or Abatement of their Rigour, toward these my unhappy Brethren, the *Roman-Catholics* of *Ireland*; If no Argument, I say, that is taken from Changes, may avail for the Purpose, I will take one from Permanence and Duration itself, that shall strike Light and Conviction to the Eye of every Beholder; that Power may *gain* say, but cannot *refute*; that Malevolence may *dispute*, but never can *answer*.

About six Generations have now passed away, according to the Rates of Purchase and Estimate of the Life of Man, since these People have offended in Word or in Deed. No Riotings have been heard in their Houses, no Complainings in their Streets, they have been silent

and harmless as Sheep before their Sheerers. Our Parties, Factions, and Insurrections, as they are merrily stiled in *England*, have been all among ourselves; this People were neither Actors nor Partakers therein. They have offered themselves to our Fleets, and to our Armies; to tend our Persons, to till our Grounds, to hew our Wood, and to draw our Water. Where we admit them to fight for us, they have ever proved valiant; where we admit them to serve us, they are found loving, observant, and faithful. Temptations have come to their Doors and called them forth; the Contagion of Rebellion hath broken out among their Neighbours; they have yet remained quiet, and continued untainted; still loyal to their Sovereign, amenable to Government, and submissive to Law, through a long and trying Succession of about seventy Years, they have scarce appeared to repine in the midst of their Calamities.

When I look back on the querulous and restless Nature of Man: When I trace the human Propensities through the Records of Ages and Nations: In all the Histories of those States  
who

who had least Cause of Complaint : Throughout the Commonwealths of *Asia minor*, the *Archipelago*, the *Grecian Continent*, *Italy*, the Islands of the *Mediterranean*, &c. where the RIGHTS OF NATURE, under Forms of various Institution, were ASSERTED BY LIBERTY AND GUARDED BY LAW : Where the ASSURANCE OF PROPERTY gave most REASON FOR CONTENT : I can find but few Instances of any People who, through such a Length of Time, have continued firm and unshaken, in an uninterrupted Loyalty and Submission to Government.

What, then, do we look for further ? What Proofs do we yet require, of Peacefulness and Attachment at the Hands of these our Brethren ? Is no Period to be put to their State of Probation ? Must they *for ever* keep out upon *Quarantine*, without Harbour or Hopes of Rest or Reconciliation ? That were hard, indeed.

If it is Revenge that we seek, they have, already, suffered enough, not for their own



Faults, but for the Hostility of their Forefathers. If we seek our Safety, alone; let us chace *them*, at once, from Country and Community; or put an *End to our domestic Fears*, by giving them Cause to defend us.

Indeed, Sir, neither common Sense, nor Sense of any Kind, can possibly suppose, That Acts of Kindness which have been, from the Beginning of the World, the Cement of Friendship to all other People, should prove the reverse to these People alone.

Had they been to us, as the Swallow, in Autumn, who forsakes all Connections on the Approach of Inclemency, I should never have pleaded for any Confidence in them. But a People, who, through a Winter of seventy Years Continuance, have never failed, or forsaken, or given us Cause of Offence, surely merit some Consideration, some grateful and chearing Ray to warm them to a Sense that *Protestants* are not, by choice, of a cruel, unfor- giving, and malevolent Nature.

Lastly,

Laſtly, Sir, as I know you to be a Gentleman of a communicative Diſpoſition, and that you were, formerly, fond of exhibiting the Sentiments of ſome of your Friends; ſhould you impart this Letter to any of your popiſh Acquaintance, I doubt they might be apt to give me more Thanks than I am conſcious I deſerve. It is, therefore, but commonly honeſt, to advertiſe you, and them, that while I write in the favour of *Papiſts*, the Intereſt of *Proteſtants* is never out of my Eye.

When I thought your Favourites moſt formidable, I ſhewed I did not fear them. And, now, that I think them impotent, let them not think I flatter.

What I have, hitherto, hinted, is but a narrow Opening to the Concerns and Intereſts of an unhappy Country, whereof I have the Miſfortune to be a helpleſs, though loving, Member. To promote the Advantage of *Ireland*, in any Reſpect, would be, to me, the cardinal Point of the whole Compaſs of my Ambition.

And

And a subsequent Letter may shew, how far  
my Observations relate to the Decline, or Prof-  
perity, of my Country, whenever you confer  
the Pleasure of an Answer, on

*Dear Sir,*

*Your truly affectionate, &c.*



*By the Author of the foregoing Letter.*

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